

## Excessive heat, humidity pose danger to students

The recurrent heat waves of Texas' summers pose life-threatening dangers to school children and athletes as they begin a new season's extracurricular activities. It is critically important that physical education teachers, coaches, band and drill team directors and all who supervise physical activity understand the risks to students who exercise in hot, humid conditions. The risk of suffering heat exhaustion or heat stroke significantly increases as temperatures reach 90°F with humidity as low as 20 percent.

Therefore, please review the following points as you develop your lesson plans and practice schedules.

- Start slowly, and take your time getting the kids "back in shape." Even star athletes often return to school having lost the aerobic capacity they may have had at the close of last season.
- Advise students to wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothes which allow air to cool the skin.
- Ensure that your students drink fluids even before they feel thirsty. Their awareness of thirst may lag behind their need for fluid. Always urge children to drink water before, during and after exercise.
- Children can become acclimated to hot-weather exercise, but must be allowed to do so gradually. Students involved in moderate-to-vigorous exercise daily will need 5-to-7 days to adjust to exercising in the heat. Those on more irregular exercise schedules will take longer to adapt.
- If students must exercise outside, they should begin with a 1-to-2 ratio of exercise to rest schedule. For instance, every five minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise should be followed by 10 minutes' rest and fluid replacement. Likewise, 10 minutes' exertion warrants 20 minutes' rest and fluid intake. As students adapt to the heat, gradually increase their exercise time as you decrease break time.
- Water is the best fluid for your body. However, fluids that contain no more than 7 percent sugar (sport drinks) also are acceptable.

## Watch for these warning signs of heat illness

No two kids are exactly alike, which means you must constantly monitor all your students or athletes for signs of heat-related illness. Children may try to ignore the seriousness of heat illness, but coaches and directors must take no chances when symptoms appear. Learn to recognize the warning signs of the most dangerous forms of heat illness, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Be ready to respond immediately with appropriate care.

Condition	Symptoms	Response Care
Heat Exhaustion	Normal or slightly elevated body temperature Pale, clammy skin with profuse perspiration General weakness with possible headaches Nausea and/or vomiting Dizziness and/or fainting	Stop activity immediately. Get victim to a cool, dry environment and give plenty of fluids. Do not resume activity until normal fluid balances are re-established (1 - 2 days).
Heat Stroke	High body temperature (106°F or higher) Hot, red, and dry skin conditions Rapid and strong pulse Victim may be unconscious.	Requires immediate medical attention. Call 9-1-1 or EMS. While waiting for medical response, get victim to cool environment.